

Redaction of a letter in the form of an email dated October 13, 2013 from Sara Simons, Chairman of the Board.

Sara C Simons <sara.c.simons@gmail.com>
To: Charlie Dean <charlie.dean81@gmail.com>

Sun, Oct 13, 2013 at 9:49 AM

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Hello Charlie,

Thank you for your several communications to the General Board, received over the past couple of weeks. I apologize for not responding sooner to your emails and letters, but will now attempt to address some of your concerns.

Accounting for digital corporate documents. When I heard that you had volunteered to digitalize our archived records, my first thought was "How wonderful!" In the event of a fire or natural weather disaster, the loss of the 75 years of hard copy records would be devastating to the church. However, I have come to understand through various comments you have made in your letters to the Board as well as our discussions during the last board meeting, that you are apparently more concerned with easy and immediate digital access to our more current 2013 records from the Board meetings. Digitalizing our archived records and developing a procedure to facilitate immediate digital access to current records are two vastly different projects. While I personally believe that the more urgent of the two projects is that of digitally archiving our hard copy files, it should be understood that before either project can be undertaken, we need to have a plan, or procedure, or SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for approaching either of the two projects at hand.

First, though, a few words about our current SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) for 1. Filing and storing current and archived records; and 2. Open access to both current and archived records.

1. Our SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for: Filing and storing current and archived records.

a. **Current and active records:** As we discussed during the last General Board Meeting, the official Board Meeting documents consists of hard copies of the various committee and Officer reports, as well as the meeting agenda, sign-in sheet, minutes from the previous board Meeting, and any other documentation submitted during the course of the meeting. These documents are collected during the meeting, and held by the Recording Secretary, in a secure and orderly fashion, until the end of the business year, when they are filed upstairs in our filing cabinets.

b. **Archived records:** At the close of each business year (which, for Oaks, coincides with the calendar year), the outgoing Recording Secretary will take the official current year documents of each of the monthly General Board meetings, the Annual Business meeting, and any Executive Board meetings or Specially Called meetings, and file them, chronologically by month, upstairs in our file room. You stated in one of your letters that "The Church records are a dismal mess." When I last visited the file room, I found the records were actually filed in quite an orderly fashion. Admittedly it has been some months since I've been up there, and in the process of someone accessing the files and re-filing documents, a few documents might have been replaced out of order. This was, in truth, one of the reasons that I was delighted at your offer to digitalize our archived records, as that process would, in itself, necessitate the files being restored to perfect order.

2. Our SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for: Open access to both current and archived records.

a. **Open access to current records:** As stated above, the Recording Secretary maintains all current official documents from the General Board meetings, Executive Board meetings and the Annual Business meeting. I do want to make one clarification here. When we are discussing our records, please note that the "official" documents are those that are submitted to the Recording Secretary and entered into the minutes during the meetings. At one point you mentioned that some documents were on people's personal computers, and were therefore already digitalized. While that may be true, those copies are not the "official" documents. Our SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for accessing these official documents would be to simply speak to the Recording Secretary and request a copy. If you just want a copy of an unofficial

document for your own personal use, you could go to source, so to speak, and ask the Officer or Committee Chair that originally produced the document, for a copy.

b. Open access to archived records: Our SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for accessing our archived records is even easier. Just visit the Church during office hours, access the records, retrieve the document, and after making a copy, re-file the document. If you are "stair" challenged, I'm sure that the Office Secretary or Senior Minister would be happy to assist you.

Now, to address the two projects I spoke about earlier. Again, I reiterate, that in my opinion the more important of the two would be to digitalize our archived records. As we discussed in the last Board meeting, however, I want a definitive plan drawn up and agreed upon by the board before any digitalizing effort is put in to the project. Here are some of the questions that need to be addressed first:

Where will the documents be kept? What is to be included in each document package? What will the digital format be? What will the naming convention be? What will the actual process be for digitalizing the records? How will they be made both accessible and secure? Who will have the ongoing responsibility for updating and accessing them? What will be done with the hard copy documents?
Here are my suggestions:

1. Where will the documents be kept? The church could purchase a 1T USB External hard drive. During the digitalization process, the hard drive would be kept at the Church for those working on the project to access. The drive would need to be backed up on a regular schedule.
2. What is to be included in each document package? I would suggest a packet containing each document submitted to the Recording Secretary during the meeting, in chronological order by submission. It would be handy to devise a form or "first page" that would list, in order, each document included in the packet.
3. What will the digital format be? I would suggest the packet be put in PDF format. Larry Scruggs has, however, brought up several valid points about digital records. They must be continually reformatted and updated to current digital usage. While we all may be able to access and read PDF formatted documents today, in ten years from now, the PDF format may be totally unreadable by the hardware of 2023. I have a whole drawer full of "important files" recorded, not more than 15 years ago to zip floppy drives, which are of course, totally unreadable by any working hardware I own today.
4. What will the naming convention be? I would suggest the following for file names:
YYYY_MM_DD_Board, YYYY_MM_DD_Exec, and YYYY_MM_DD_Annual
Filed in folders designated by year: YYYY_Board_Meetings, YYYY_Events, YYYY_Auxillary_Orgs, ect.
5. What will the actual process be for digitalizing the records? I would suggest going to file room and getting one month packet of documents, put in them in order by submission (you would have to refer to the minutes for that meeting), fill out and include the inventory list form, and then scan the packet to one PDF document. Rename the document according to the naming conventions and file on the drive according to folder year. Replace the hard copies in the file drawer and move on to the next packet.
6. How will they be made both accessible and secure? I would suggest the external hard drive should be kept in the Office of the Secretary and secured at night in a locked drawer. When the secretary's machine is backed-up, the hard drive could be connect by USB port and included in the back-up. During office hours, the hard drive could be made available for accessing the archived records.
7. Who will have the ongoing responsibility for updating and accessing them? At this time I do not want to unnecessarily burden the Office Secretary with the added responsibility of updating the files, or releasing them for access. Once the archived files are all digitalized, we can formulate a plan for updating the files with the current records, and deciding who will have the ultimate responsibility for maintaining the drive. Perhaps the responsibility would fall to the current Recording Secretary, or perhaps we would appoint an historical archivist to maintain the drive.
8. What will be done with the hard copy documents? It should be noted here that I do not recommend doing away with our hard copy files. These, as Larry says, will last forever, and are and would continue to be accessible to all.

It is my further recommendation that, at this time, we should table the idea of digitalizing our current and active records and until we have a permanent SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) perfected and in place for our archived records. I foresee the process might fall to the Recording Secretary to create the PDF document, either after each Board Meeting, or at the end of the year, and then transfer the file or files, according to the naming conventions, to the hard drive for archival purposes.

As we discussed during the last Board Meeting, we do not have the facility or wherewithal to securely store the official documents online for access from the internet. I believe that we are all, as a congregation, comfortable with our current level of access to those documents. You inferred in one of your letters that we might be in violation of a law requiring access to documents, but you did not mention which law, or exactly how we might be out of compliance. It would be helpful if the law could be specified, so that we may take a look at the verbiage concerning congregational access to church documents and plan to bring ourselves into compliance going forward.

We have also discussed the digitalization of our monthly newsletters and online access for the archived newsletters. As you know, the newsletter is currently being delivered via email to those members of the congregation with email accounts. We discussed posting the current newsletter on our church web page, and perhaps linking to our archived newsletters. There was discussion at the last Board meeting about the personal identification information contained in the newsletters, and the privacy concerns of individual's information released in the articles. As you recall, after some discussion, it was decided that before the newsletters were posted to the web page, they would be edited for any personal identification content, and that going forward the newsletter would either be constructed with this in mind, or a special "web content" newsletter would be created with internet publication in mind. Since part of the Church Office Secretary's duties are to publish the monthly newsletter, and you indicated your disinterest in learning anything about the church web page software, that task will continue to be part of the Church Office Secretary's duties.

I am aware that this letter does not address all the issues that you have brought before the General Board. However, it should serve to clarify the decisions that have been made regarding the digitalization of Church records. Again, thank you for your interest in these matters and good faith offer of volunteering to help where needed within our church community. If you would like to sit down with me and discuss some of these issues in greater detail, please let me know.

Yours faithfully in Christ,

Sara C. Simons,

Oaks Christian Church (DOC)